

VANADIUM CORPORATION OF AMERICA

HAER No. CO-81-A

(VCA) NATURITA MILL, OFFICE BUILDING  
approximately three miles northwest of Naturita,  
between Colorado State Highway and  
the San Miguel River  
Vicinity of Naturita  
Montrose County  
Colorado

HAER  
COLO  
43-NATU.V  
1A-

PHOTOGRAPH  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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**Location:** In southwest quadrant of VCA Naturita Mill complex, north of entry, approximately three miles northwest of Naturita, between Colorado State Highway 141 to the southwest, and the San Miguel River to the northeast; in the NW1/4 of the SW1/4 of Section 14, Township 46 North, Range 16 West

**Date of Construction:** 1960-61

**Designer:** VCA Drafting Department - Durango

**Builder:** Built by VCA employees working under the direction of Troy Newland, master mechanic, Tom Kelly, assistant master mechanic, and Bob Newland, mill supervisor

**Present Owner:** Cyprus-Amax Minerals Corporation, 9100 E. Mineral Circle, Englewood, CO, 80112

**Present Use:** Vacant / Not in Use

**Significance:** The VCA Naturita Mill Office Building was constructed in 1960-61 as part of an effort to reconstruct the facility as an experimental uranium and vanadium ore concentrating facility. Between 1958 (when the milling operation had closed) and 1961, VCA had been paying miners to ship raw ore to the company's Durango mill. By first concentrating the ore at Naturita, VCA hoped to greatly reduce the volume of ore shipped to Durango, and correspondingly reduce the company's shipping costs. In the end, however, the cost to concentrate the ore at Naturita was greater than the savings gained by reducing the tonnage shipped to Durango. As a result, the concentrating facility was not in operation for long. It closed in early 1963. During this brief two-year period, the Office Building was utilized to maintain company records related to the concentrating operation. Items such as shipment schedules from ore suppliers, assay results, payroll records, and correspondence and contracts with the Atomic Energy Commission (which purchased uranium from VCA) and steel companies (which purchased vanadium) were all processed and maintained in the Office Building.

Between 1963 and 1978, the Office Building was used to maintain records related to VCA's consolidation efforts on the Colorado Plateau. During this period, VCA-owned mining and milling equipment was brought to Naturita from VCA facilities in Durango (closed 1963),

Marysville, Utah (closed circa 1964), Monument No. 2 (closed 1968), and Shiprock, New Mexico (closed 1978). At Naturita, equipment from these facilities was liquidated for the best prices that could be obtained. Between 1975 and the late 1980s, the Office Building was also used by the Nuclear Division of General Electric which had leased a portion of the Naturita site for use as an ore buying station. The station served as a market to those miners who did not want to ship their ore to the Union Carbide facility in Uravan.

**General Description:** The mill Office Building was a single-story, simple rectangular building, constructed of concrete masonry unit (CMU) walls on a concrete foundation. A green CMU veneer ran around the exterior perimeter up to window sill level.

The building's roof was a shallow-sloped, front-facing gable with deep overhangs, comprised of gravel-ballasted built-up roofing over tongue and groove decking, supported by a 6x12 built-up beam system, which ran perpendicular to the roof slope at six foot centers.

The building's two exterior doors were half-light, wood panel, and windows were steel industrial sash. Each window unit consisted of a fixed picture window flanked by a casement on each side, and a five-light transom over top. Window spacing was intermittent.

The building was raised and each entry (front and rear) was accessed from a two foot high concrete landing, with steps. Interior finishes were painted CMU walls and a dropped, painted plywood ceiling, held in place with wood battens.